

***Polemonium carneum* Gray**  
Great polemonium, Salmon polemonium  
Polemoniaceae (Phlox Family)

**Status:** State Threatened

**Rank:** G4S1S2

**General Description:** A rhizomatous perennial that reaches heights from 12 to 40 in. (31 to 102 cm). Usually *P. carneum* grows in clumps, rarely separate. It has compound leaves with approx. 11 to 21 leaflets, three of which occur at the tip of the leaf stem, with sticky hairs on the leaf surfaces. The flowering stalk is smooth, becoming hairy and sticky near the inflorescence. The flowers hang in whorls on the main stalk. The flower pedicels are as long as the length of the petals. The style protrudes out of the ovary past the petals. All of the petals are uniformly  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. (2 to 3 cm) long. The corolla is  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. (2 to 3 cm) long. The flowers can range in color from white to an orange-yellow (salmon) color or even purple.

**Identification Tips:** This is a relatively distinct species. Its fine hairs on the flowers and the long flower stalk should be obvious and are distinct among the *Polemonium* species. This is one of two of the tallest *Polemonium* species, the other being *P. occidentale*. The difference between *P. carneum* and *P. occidentale* is the flower color: *P. occidentale* has a blue flower and *P. carneum* has a white to orangish flower. *P. occidentale* also has more leaf segments (19 to 27), whereas *P. carneum* has 11 to 21 leaf segments.

**Phenology:** The flowers are in bloom from May to August. A few documented cases showed flowers blooming around mid-April and into September.

**Range:** *Polemonium carneum* has been found from the western side of the Cascade Mountains in northwestern Washington, south to San Francisco Bay, California. It grows in the lowlands of mountain ranges and in prairies, to moderate elevations in the mountains. *P. carneum* has been documented in Lewis, Clallam, Gray's Harbor, Clark, Skamania, and Pacific counties in Washington.

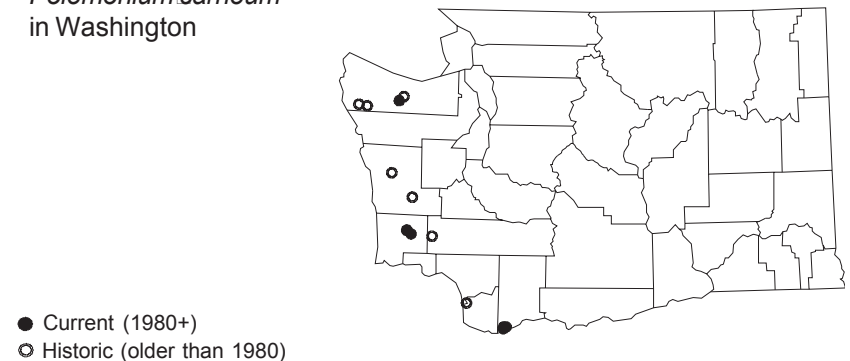
**Habitat:** Great polemonium is commonly found in woody thickets, open and moist forests, prairie edges, roadsides, and has been extensively documented along fence lines. In Washington, it has been found at elevations ranging from 200 to 2000 ft (61 to 610 m).

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Known distribution of  
*Polemonium carneum*  
in Washington



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Photo by David Goff



Washington Natural Heritage  
Program Photo

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**Ecology:** *Polemonium carneum* can be found in sunny to somewhat shaded areas with a damp humus-like soil. It can also be seen in soils of meadows and prairies.

**State Status Comments:** Although there have been a few occurrences of this species within the last 20 years, little information on population sizes and occurrences has been documented.

**Inventory Needs:** 23 More intensive studies should take place to gain further knowledge of its limited yet wide-ranging populations.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Threats include grazing by cattle, roadside maintenance and weed control, timber harvest, succession in some communities, and fence removal or installation. Given the habitat and range of the species, any grazing may pose a particular threat to the limited occurrences of this plant.

### **References:**

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 4: Ericaceae Through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 510 pp.

Rickett, H.W. 1971. *Wild Flowers of The United States, Volume 5, part two*. The New York Botanical Garden, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 361 pp.

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